

President Allan Rock's decision on the Ottawa Cinema Politica (OCP) Friday documentary film and discussion series at the University of Ottawa, Ottawa, Canada

(Summer 2008)

This file contains the four following documents:

(((1))) August 7, 2008: The final final answer from president Allan Rock's administration, dated August 7, 2008. (Note that Allan Rock forwarded what he wanted Secretary of the University Pamela Harrod to send in the name of his administration, as indicated by the attached bottom of the Harrod message.)

(((2))) July 30, 2008: Professor Denis Rancourt's continued attempt to get an answer, dated July 30, 2008.

(((3))) July 19, 2008: Professor Denis Rancourt's letter to President Allan Rock, dated July 19, 2008.

(((4))) July 14, 2008: Letter from Secretary of the University Pamela Harrod to Professor Denis Rancourt cancelling OCP, dated July 14, 2008. (Note Secretary of the University is a VP position.)

A summary of the situation prior to the Harrod July 14th letter is given here:

<http://uofowatch.blogspot.com/2008/01/christian-values-do-not-apply-to-deaf.html>

A first media reaction to the Harrod July 14th letter is given here:

<http://ottawa.indymedia.ca/en/2008/07/8037.shtml>

((1))) ANSWER FROM PAMELA HARROD:

Subject:RE: President's intervention requested, Ottawa Cinema Politica

Date:Thu, 7 Aug 2008 14:37:03 -0400

From:Secrétaire de l'université - Secretary of the University <securuniv@uottawa.ca>

To:<DGR@uottawa.ca>

CC:Cabinet du recteur - Office of the President <recteur@uottawa.ca>

References:<02D4BC9A936EC44D8859400FFBDF6761F56F03@MSMAIL1.uottawa.o.univ>

Dear Professor Rancourt,

Thank you for your email of July 19, 2008 addressed to Mr. Allan Rock, and which he has directed to my attention for reply.

My letter of July 14, 2008 to you explained the reasons why the University of Ottawa will not provide a venue for the Cinema Politica event.

In addition, we disagree with many of your assertions as to the facts and the characterizations of the issues as contained in your email. As you know, many of these issues are being addressed in different fora.

Sincerely,

Pamela A. Harrod
Secretary of the University/Secrétaire de l'Université
Université d'Ottawa/Ottawa University
550, rue Cumberland Street, Ottawa ON K1N 6N5
Tel: (613) 562-5950
Fax: (613) 562-5178
securuniv@uottawa.ca

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-----Original Message-----

From: Cabinet du recteur - Office of the President

Dear Professor Rancourt,

Thank you for your email of July 19, 2008 addressed to Mr. Allan Rock, and which he has directed to my attention for reply.

My letter of July 14, 2008 to you explained the reasons why the University of Ottawa will not provide a venue for the Cinema Politica event.

In addition, we disagree with many of your assertions as to the facts and the characterizations of the issues as contained in your email. As you know, many of these issues are being addressed in different fora.

Sincerely,

From: dgr@uottawa.ca[SMTP:DGR@UOTTAWA.CA]

Sent: Saturday, July 19, 2008 4:43:34 PM

To: Cabinet du recteur - Office of the President; Allan Rock

Cc: dgr@uottawa.ca

Subject: President's intervention requested, Ottawa Cinema Politica

Importance: High

Auto forwarded by a Rule

July 19, 2008

Allan Rock

President

University of Ottawa

(by email)

Re: Ottawa Cinema Politica

Dear President Rock,

The purpose of this email letter is to ask you to intervene urgently to fix an error made by the previous administration.

Attached, please find a letter sent to me by Secretary of the University of Ottawa Pamela Harrod, in the name of the University of Ottawa. This letter was sent on July 14, 2008; the day before you took office and after Dr. Patry's end of term of June 30, 2008.

[...]

((2))) STILL TRYING TO GET AN ANSWER:

Subject: Answer requested: My email of July 19, 2008, to President Allan Rock, Cinema Politica

From: dgr@uottawa.ca

Date: Wed, 30 July, 2008 12:18 pm

To: julie.cafley@uOttawa.ca
gmalette@uOttawa.ca

Cc: dgr@uottawa.ca
president@uOttawa.ca
allan.rock@uottawa.ca

July 30, 2008

Julie Cafley
Executive Assistant to the President
room 213B
(613) 562-5800-1032
julie.cafley@uOttawa.ca

Ginette Malette
Executive Secretary
room 212
(613)562-5809
gmalette@uOttawa.ca

Cc:
Allan Rock
President and Vice-Chancellor
room 212
(613)562-5809
president@uOttawa.ca
allan.rock@uottawa.ca

Re: My email of July 19, 2008, to President Allan Rock, Cinema Politica

Dear Ginette and Julie,

I left you both voice-mails today about the above matter. I would like

a reply as soon as possible.

I am trying to know the President's position regarding my letter (email) of July 19, 2008, concerning Secretary of the University Pamela Harrod's letter of July 14, 2008, cancelling the Cinema Politica film events that I have hosted and organized since September 2005.

I received an electronic receipt that the President opened my July 19th email on July 19th but I have not received word otherwise.

Is the President considering this important issue which has impact on the community? Can I expect an answer from or a meeting with the President?

I await your reply. Please consider this an urgent matter of great concern to many regular film series participants.

Sincerely,
Denis Rancourt
(Professor)

((3)) LETTER TO ALLAN ROCK:

July 19, 2008

Allan Rock
President
University of Ottawa
(by email: allan.rock@uottawa.ca)

Re: Ottawa Cinema Politica

Dear President Rock,

The purpose of this email letter is to ask you to intervene urgently to fix an error made by the previous administration.

Attached, please find a letter sent to me by Secretary of the University of Ottawa Pamela Harrod, in the name of the University of Ottawa. This letter was sent on July 14, 2008; the day before you took office and after Dr. Patry's end of term of June 30, 2008.

I have offered a weekly Friday evening documentary film and post-film discussion event every week of the academic year that there are classes continuously since September 2005. The University has ALWAYS booked the needed auditorium and paid all associated fees for these events, up to and including the 2007-2008 academic year.

Community outreach and service is a recognized part of a university professor's duties and workload, as are research, publications of communications into the public domain, and teaching.

Academic freedom is a set of rights acquired by professors, via a long history of precedent-setting legal decisions and via an accepted culture and practice on university campuses (see M. Horn, 1999, *Academic Freedom in Canada*, U of T Press, pp.446; see also Arbitrator Michel G. Picher's June 25, 2008, award in the recent case at University of Ottawa). Under academic freedom professors are free to choose their research topics and are responsible for their choices of pedagogical methods.

Similarly, I know of no past case where a university administration has instructed a professor that a particular community service would not be recognized as part of the professor's duties and workload.

Universities are the defenders of academic freedom and university administrations have a responsibility to help all professors accomplish their duties, within the limits of economic possibility and in a coordinated way that allows curricula, etc., to be delivered.

Therefore, to my knowledge, Dr. Harrod's letter represents the first example where a university administration is directly interfering with a professor's choice of community service and with the material delivery of this service. This, in a case where there is always at least one free auditorium or large classroom available on campus on Friday evenings.

The reasons given in Dr. Harrod's letter are so contrived that they suggest political motivation or interference, something you will be perceptive in detecting.

The three untenable reasons expressed in Dr. Harrod's letter are as follows.

((1)) The film and discussion events are "unrelated to [my] workload".

This contradicts: (a) a letter I have from past Dean of the Faculty of Science Dr. Christian Detellier, (b) my annual reports to the Dean up to and including 2007-2008, and (c) the fact that the auditorium was always booked and paid for by the University (contrary to University Policy on the use of rooms by outside groups).

This new, unjustified, and unilateral position of the administration is a violation of my academic freedom.

((2)) Cinema Politica is an independent entity (that can be made responsible for Deaf access), therefore, Cinema Politica was running the film and discussion series not our Professor Rancourt...

Cinema Politica, as I have used it, is a no-profit group that helps independent campus groups (across Canada and in other countries) promote their local events by providing a self-serve web site service for promotion. Period.

Since September 2005, the film and discussion series that I have continuously organized and facilitated has gone under different names: "the activism course film series", "Alternative Voices Series", and recently "Ottawa Cinema Politica" or "OCP". The last name change was only made for the small associated promotional advantages.

Cinema Politica (based at Concordia), the web site (and film exchange service; which I have never used), has never had the financial possibility of providing Deaf access via sign language interpretation and it has never done so. It has always been a completely free service to its members on different campuses and it has always accepted all campus groups that wish to use its services.

This summer, Cinema Politica has announced that it will start charging fees to its member groups. As a result, I have decided to detach myself from Cinema Politica and to rename the film and discussion series yet again.

In conclusion: Cinema Politica has helped me perform my community service duties as a professor at the University of Ottawa. The previous administration claimed that therefore the film and discussion series cannot be counted in the community service component of my workload. By the same logic, NSERC-funded research cannot be counted as a professor's research component of her workload; publications in subsidized journals cannot be counted as the publication component of a professor's work; teaching performed with donated or privately-subsidized teaching technology cannot be counted as the teaching component of the professor's work; etc.

The previous administration's sophistry is daring by any standard.

((((3))) Cinema Politica did not provide Deaf access in 2007-2008 therefore it is barred from reserving University of Ottawa rooms in the future.

Leaving aside that the SFUO student union stepped in and provided Deaf access and leaving aside that the University provided Deaf access before its (unreasonable) position became firm and leaving aside that I am no longer associated with Cinema Politica (see above), the previous administration's "logic" here is truly stunning.

It amounts to: "We the University, with our multi-million-dollar surpluses (compared to the SFUO), decided to deny Deaf access on the basis of our violating Professor Rancourt's academic freedom, and, therefore, we must now deny the broader hearing and student communities access to this popular film and discussion series."

More succinctly: "We violated human rights by denying Deaf access, so we will now deny the community this film and discussion series as well." (A related OHRC complaint is in process, as you must know.)

When faced with this kind of absurdity, you will understand, Mr. President, that I am compelled to appeal directly to your office. Please inject some sanity into the institution and rectify this error as soon as possible.

The past president has already received many letters of support for the film and discussion series; that the administration can certainly share with you.

In light of an initial media reaction to the news of Ms. Harrod's letter (<http://ottawa.indymedia.ca/en/2008/07/8037.shtml>), and the many enquiries that I continue to receive, I ask that this problem be solved immediately, so that I can inform the hundreds of concerned regular series attendees accordingly on July 26th, and proceed to organize the 2008-2009 series.

Please indicate your administrative position before July 26th. I would also enjoy meeting you as soon as possible if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,
Denis Rancourt
(Professor)
<http://www.science.uottawa.ca/~dgr/>

(((4))) HARROD LETTER OF JULY 14TH:



uOttawa

Université d'Ottawa
Cabinet du secrétaire

University of Ottawa
Office of the Secretary

July 14, 2008.

Professor Denis Rancourt
35 Simcoe Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1S 1A3

Dear Professor Rancourt :

Re : Cinema Politica

The purpose of this letter is to inform you that the University of Ottawa will not be allocating a room to Cinema Politica for the screening of its films for the 2008-2009 season.

As previously communicated to you, you are not entitled to request your academic unit to reserve a meeting room on behalf of Cinema Politica as its activities are unrelated to your workload. Even if such request is made directly through Housing and Convention Services, the University of Ottawa is unable to grant such a request since, by failing to provide interpretative services at its events as required by the Ontario Human Rights Code, Cinema Politica did not respect all applicable statutes, regulations and University of Ottawa policies in its use of the University's facilities in 2007-2008.

Sincerely,

Pamela A. Harrod
University Secretary

cc: Micheline Charbonneau Séguin, Housing & Convention Services